

DOES EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT IMPACT JOB PERFORMANCE EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE MINISTRY OF LABOR IN THE KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

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ABSTRACT

This research attempts to investigate how empowerment impact job performance of the employees working at the ministry of labor in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Due to that traditional practices in terms of routine and centralization might hamper a smooth work flow in business organizations, it was crucial important to address this problem and to gauge the power of employees through a multidimensional model that covers tasks, power, commitment and culture as main facets of employee empowerment.

The research was adopted through the use of the analytical descriptive approach, utilizing questionnaire to identify the impact of employee empowerment on job performance. The selected sample was 128 employees working at the ministry of labor.

The research concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between empowerment and job performance of those employees as the value of the correlation coefficient was 0.677 while the multiple regression coefficient revealed that the employee empowerment in terms of tasks, capacity, commitment and culture dimensions influence the job performance by 55.2%. The results had also indicated that there are statistical differences in terms of demographic variables such as (gender, age, qualifications, and job title).

KEYWORDS: Empowerment, Tasks, Power, Commitment, Culture, Job Performance

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INTRODUCTION

Human resource is considered one of the vital resources that a business organization possesses due to the diverse capabilities, experiences, skills and competencies it owns. There is no doubt that empowerment practiced by many managers constitutes an important tool to train subordinates to bear larger responsibilities and to prepare them for superior jobs.

The term “empowerment” in the human resource literature came up in 1990s, when Bowen and Lawler (1992) found that empowerment is the sharing of four organizational ingredients; information acquired by the front-line employees, the knowledge that enable them to contribute in the overall performance of the organization, while the other ingredients are reward and power exerted by employees in making decisions. However, Spreader (1995) stipulated that “empowerment” is a motivational construct made up from four dimensions; meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact and the absence of any of these dimensions will not eliminate the

overall empowerment which is in contrast with what was reported by Bowen and Lawler.

Baird and Wang (2010) agreed on employee empowerment is more significant in a dynamic environment where knowledge workers are more dominant and organizations are moving towards decentralization.

Job performance is considered one of the key variables associated with the job that all business organizations pursue, measure and control. Because the success or failure of any business organization depends on the performance of its employees, it is crucially important to monitor this performance and to reinforce the culture of empowerment to enable employees to gain more knowledge, exert supervisory tasks and create potential promotional opportunities.

For the last two decades, job performance has been a major construct in the field of human resource management; thus, it has received considerable attention in the literature where academics agreed that it is a multi-dimensional concept. Many distinguished between behavioral and outcome aspects of the performance. (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993; Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, and Sager, 1993; Roe, 1999)

Others perceived job performance from a single perspective as an activity that enables the individual accomplish the mission or objectives successfully. This depends on the limits of reasonable usage of resources. (Jamel 1995)

From an employee's perception, job performance is considered the result of a series of behaviors. The various duties achieved on a daily basis contribute to job performance in general (Cardy 2004 p. 13)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Empowerment

Empowerment definition in the dictionary refers to strengthening or supporting, this means that an empowered employee is a person who is capable to do a specific action.

The concept of employee empowerment passed through different stages that reflect the development in the professional performance of the job. Changes in the tasks required by the employee to perform, necessitates applying empowerment onto the different managerial levels. Since empowerment changes the job role the employee undertakes, it guarantees exposing him/her to training on managerial approaches and prepare a second and third row of employees who possess the required competencies. (Fetter man; Wanders man, 2009)

McWilliams and Allan (2003) referred that empowerment should not pursue a constant pattern in all business organizations, it is a relative process that changes from a situation to another, it might be related to business re-engineer as empowerment enable structuring of the business organization. Without empowerment, employee promotion will not occur and if business organizations are forced for, it will not be based on subjective criteria.

Gaudreau, M (2012) stated that the most important dimension of empowerment is the engagement of employees in the management then followed by motivation and incentives. It was notable that with a real implementation of employee empowerment, employee performance is increasing in a creative way (Fallak & Nafla, 2011) and (Radi, 2010). Most of the employees whom have been delegated and empowered have demonstrated an increase in their performance and productivity, as decentralization in decision making, entitling employees with more authorities to solve problems will lead to empowerment. (Psoinos & Smithson, 2002)

Al Selmy (2011) reported that the key ingredients of employee empowerment is knowledge, skill, communication, accuracy of information, organizational confidence, incentive, organizational culture, engagement and delegation. This is

supported by Al Kasasba, et.al (2012) whom found that there is an impact of the empowerment culture on the organization performance and there is an impact of transformational leadership on the organization performance. In their research, Fernandez and Moldogaziev (2013) found that organizational practices of empowerment may raise employees' productivity more efficiently and effectively. In the same context, they concluded that empowering employees will affect their performance and innovativeness' capacity. Whilst the results revealed by Sahoo et al. (2010) confirmed that empowering employees might create better opportunities for commitment to their organization, and particularly if they are involved in the decision-making process. In clear support of Sahoo views, Wadhwa & Varghese (2015) concluded that employees' empowerment leads to job satisfaction and commitment towards their organization and the provision of authority to an individual along with the responsibility might lower employees' turnover and increase employees' retention.

Armache, (2013) contends employees' empowerment increase their fundamental motivation and helps them feel their importance and contribution to the overall performance, and develop their capabilities and self-determination. This clearly support the findings of Fernandez and Moldogaziev (2013) and confirm the suggestion raised by Celiket.al.(2014) that managers should create a system that allow for employee empowerment to occur in an effective and efficient way.

The following empowerment implications can be concluded from the several definitions identified in

The literature:

- Initially, empowerment is perceived as one of the results of employees' contribution in decision making.
- Throughout the tasks undertaken by employees, empowerment supports the organization' infrastructure by allowing employees to be more independent, participative, knowledgeable and self-responsible.

Inspired from the work conducted by Lashely & Mc Gold rick (1994), the researchers decided to build the construct of the research model to incorporate the following dimensions:

- **Task:** Refers to the discretion allowed to the employees to perform the duties they are employed for.
- **Ability:** Is the employee capacity to carry on the tasks and duties required from him to perform.
- **Commitment:** Stands for a personal sense of ownership carried by employees and expressed in terms of their activities and work.
- **Culture:** Refers to the provision of all necessary information and data to the employees.

Job Performance

Based on the perceptions denoted by human resource scholars, job performance express the extent of employee' commitment in terms of tasks and duties required to get performed, as well as ethical commitment , professional and personal ethics towards the business organization.(Al Anzy, 2004)

Siljanen (2010) found that job performance is the extent at which employees are working to perform the duties requested from them and thus achieve the objectives set by the business organization. This supports the findings of both Al Rabeeq(2004) and Al Shamry& Darwish, (2010) whom reported that job performance is simply the bundle of tasks, duties and specific responsibilities identified in the job specification, and upon completion of these required tasks, the business organization will achieve its objevctives. In the same context, Al Bakmy (2010) revealed that job performance is the

achievements and results generated by employees in accordance to the tasks and duties assigned to them.

Based on the above discussion, the researchers proposed the following hypotheses:

H₀: There is no statistical relationship between empowerment and job performance of employees at the ministry of labor.

H₀ There are no statistical differences in the levels of employee empowerment and job performance associated with demographic variables (gender, age, qualifications, and job title).

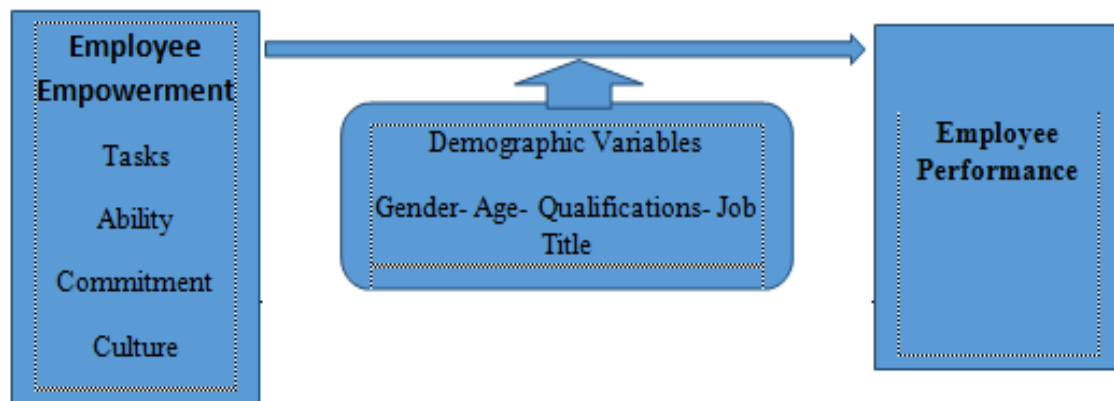


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Methodology

To study the impact of employee empowerment on job performance, an exploratory study was conducted to investigate that and it was applied to the employees working at the ministry of labor in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Based on the literature review, the construct of the model consists of empowerment dimensions (tasks, ability, commitment, and culture). Measurements of items were adapted from Lashley & McGoldrick (1994) except the dimension of power was changed by the ability dimension for contextualization consideration to get adopted to the context of the ministry of labor in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

To test the hypotheses above mentioned, data were collected through the use of a structured questionnaire that consisted of two sections, the first refers to the independent variable that is expressed in terms of 20 statements that measures the dimensions of the employee empowerment; tasks, ability, commitment and culture. While the second part refers to the dependent variable that is expressed in terms of 10 statements.

Sample Size

The study sample targets the whole study population that was 140 employees working at the ministry of labor in the Kingdom of Bahrain. A total of 128 questionnaires were received back, indicating a response rate of 91.4 percent.

Apart from demographic variables, all the other variables were measured using a five-point Likert type scale, where “strongly agree” was given five and “strongly disagree” at one.

Data Analysis Technique

Data was analyzed using via the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) computer program version 17, Cronbach Alpha, Pearson Correlation, multiple regression, mean, standard deviation, T-Test and ANOVA.

Reliability

The data was analyzed for its reliability by measuring Cronbach's alpha for all the scales used in this research.

As illustrated in table 1 the values of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient are high (0.844), thus confirming that the measurements used in this study had high internal reliability. Moreover, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was calculated for every dimension of the questionnaire as illustrated in table 1.

Validity

To confirm the validity of the questionnaire, the correlation coefficient was calculated for every statement as well as the overall value of the employee empowerment dimensions. Additionally, the correlation coefficient was calculated for the value of the statement and the overall value of job performance variable as illustrated in table 2.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the Employee Empowerment and Job Performance

Variables	Employee Empowerment Dimensions				Employee Performance
Dimensions	Tasks	Ability	Commitment	Culture	
Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	0.910	0.876	0.888	0.793	0.837
Significance	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

It is clear from the table that all Alpha Coefficient values for reliability for the dependent variable (Employee Empowerment) is high and has a statistical significance at 0.01.

Table 2: Alpha Coefficient and Correlation Coefficient for Every Statement and the Overall Value for the Employee Empowerment Dimension

Serial	Statements	Alpha Coefficient for Every Statement	Correlation Coefficient of Every Statement to the Dimension
First Dimension : Tasks			
1	The management delegates me enough authorities to perform the assigned tasks.	0.624	0.903
2	The management is confident of my ability in performing the tasks assigned to me.	0.711	0.910
3	My supervisors are not exerting given authorities only during the delegation period.	0.733	0.810
4	The management offers me the appropriate discretion to carry on the assigned tasks.	0.874	0.844
5	My job offers me the opportunity to take decision independently	0.705	0.865
Second Dimension : Ability			
1	Many employees at the ministry of labor have the capacity to carry the responsibilities assigned to them.	0.845	0.835
2	The management considers the employee ability before delegating to him/her additional authorities.	0.777	0.865
3	Only employees whom possess appropriate abilities agree on carrying delegated authorities.	0.980	0.853
4	Employees are able to predict work related problems before its occurrence.	0.911	0.672
5	Strong employee personality is considered the key criteria in choosing the employee that will be delegated.	0.932	0.811

Table 3: Continued Alpha Coefficient and Correlation Coefficient for Every Statement and the Overall Value for the Employee Empowerment Dimension

Serial	Statements	Alpha Coefficient for Every Statement	Correlation Coefficient of Every Statement to the Dimension
Third Dimension : Commitment			
1	The management prefers the most committed employee in terms of organization and performance in order to empower him /her superior tasks.	0.941	0.906
2	The empowered employee is committed to perform the assigned superior tasks.	0.942	0.856
3	The management withdraws the empowerment offered to the employee if proven not be uncommitted.	0.982	0.900
4	Employee empowerment leads to an increase in the extent of commitment for this empowered employee.	.982	0.906
5	The management provides empowered employee with discretion to exert authorities without shrinking their span of innovation and creativity.	0.981	0.952
Fourth Dimension : Culture			
1	The ministry gives the employees the opportunity to overcome their problems through the use of their experiences and knowledge.	0.822	0.769
2	The ministry exposes other employees to the achievements and success story of those empowered colleagues to act as a good example for them.	0.821	0.822
3	The employees at the ministry believe on common vision regarding the importance of the culture and knowledge as they help empowering them.	0.845	0.893
4	The philosophy of the ministry focused on the human capital, developing and empowering him/her as it is the key factor in achieving distinguished performance.	0.922	0.901
5	The ministry provide proper environment to employees for the acquisition of knowledge to raise their performance and thus empowering them.	0.832	0.831

Table 4: Alpha Coefficient and Correlation Coefficient for Every Statement and the Overall Value for Job Performance Dimension

Serial	Statements	Alpha Coefficient for Every Statement	Correlation Coefficient of Every Statement to the Dimension
Third Dimension : Commitment			
1	I am punctual.	0.909	0.845
2	I can carry on extra responsibilities.	0.980	0.712
3	I have the ability to perform the required tasks promptly.	0.980	0.712
4	We are trying in the ministry of labor to apply new approaches to solve the business problems we faced.	0.942	0.889
5	I can take appropriate decisions to deal with business situations	0.983	0.833
6	I am keen to raise new suggestions that contribute to solve business problems.	0.768	0.797
7	I participate in a positive way in all meetings conducted by the department I worked for.	0.978	0.833
8	I do have the ability to establish effective communications with others.	0.865	0.822
9	I have the ability to train other employees.	0.911	0.799

Table 4: Contd.,			
10	I follow continuously the new trends in my career to enable me improving my performance	0.810	0.615

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

Testing Hypotheses

The hypothesized relations in the proposed casual model (Figure 1) were tested with the help of Pearson Correlation Coefficient as follow:

H₀: There is no statistical relationship between employee empowerment and job performance employees at the ministry of labor.

H₀: There are no statistical differences in the levels of employee empowerment and job performance due to the demo graphic variables (gender, age, qualifications, and job title).

To test the first hypothesis, researchers have calculated correlation coefficient between the independent variable dimensions; employee empowerment and the dependent variable, job performance as shown in table 4.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Employee Empowerment and Job Performance Dimensions

Variables		Employee Empowerment Dimension				
		Tasks	Ability	Commitment	Culture	Overall Degree
Job Performance	Correlation Coefficient	0.745**	0.699**	.681**	0.404*	0.677**
	Statistical Significance	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.033	0.00
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level						

It is clear from the correlations matrix that all employee empowerment dimensions are strongly correlated with the job performance as all correlations were significant at the level (0.01) except the culture dimension where the significance was at the level (0.05) and the highest correlation values were between the tasks and job performance. This indicates that employees' opinions towards tasks were higher than other employee empowerment dimensions. To confirm the degree of impact, the researchers have used multiple regression analysis as follow:

Table 6: Multiple Regression Results Identifying the Overall Value of Employee Empowerment on Job Performance

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom (DF)	Mean Squares (MS)	Correlation Coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	F Ratio	Level of Significance at F
Regression	182.370	4	45.593	0.607	0.552	3.291	0.000
Residual Value	4343.099	123	35.310				
Total	4525.469	127					

From the multiple regression results, it was clear that there is an impact with statistical significance for the four employee empowerment dimensions on the job performance, this can be demonstrated by the high value of calculated (F) where the significance was less than 0.00 which is lower than (0.01-0.05) and this is supported by the correlation coefficient that was (0.607) which indicates that employee empowerment influence the level of job performance by 55.2% and this based on the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.552$).

Based on the finding, the null hypothesis “There is no statistical relationship between employee empowerment and job performance of employees at the ministry of labor” was rejected and to accept the alternate hypothesis. This confirms with the findings reported by (Fallak & Nafla, 2011) and (Radi, 2010)

In order to test the second hypothesis, researchers have analyzed and interpreted the demographic data and have portrayed the respondent's profile through the use of the mean, standard deviation, T-test and ANOVA to confirm the variance between the dependent dimensions and its impact on job performance as follow:

- **Gender**

The revealed results showed that there are statistical significant differences at level (0.01) for the employees working at the ministry of labor in terms of gender, this is because all values of (T) degree have statistical difference lower than the statistical significance value (0.01 -0.05) except the commitment variable as differences between male and female were not significant. Differences in gender were high in males for the three dimensions of employee empowerment (tasks, ability and commitment). This indicates that males have positive perception regarding empowerment more than females. However, there are no statistical differences between males and females in the job performance. This finding rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternate one.

- **Age**

In terms of age, the revealed results through the use of ONE WAY ANOVA showed that there are statistical significant differences at level (0.01) for the employees within the age range of (40-49 years) associated to the task dimension; this can be justified by their perception towards the necessity of empowering employees to improve their performance. Whilst, statistical differences within the age range of (30-39 years) were allied to the ability dimension and this can be referred to those employees' opinion that they believe on their capacity to bear extended responsibilities and undertake additional tasks. Whereas, the results of respondents within the age range of (50 years and above) were the highest in terms of commitment. From a holistic perspective, the results showed that there are differences with statistical significance at level 0.01 for those employees within the age range of (30-39 years) on job performance. This finding rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternate one.

- **Qualifications**

The revealed results showed that there are statistical significant differences at level (0.01) associated to qualifications for all employee empowerment' dimensions except commitment where statistical significant differences were at level (0.05). The differences among all employees for the empowerment' dimensions were for those who are holders of post studies and this can be referred to their perception that the more qualifications the employee possesses the greater opportunity for empowerment to exert. Whilst, differences among employees regarding job performance were statistically significant at level (0.01) for those employees whom have a bachelor degree as their opinions were the highest about that variable. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate one is accepted.

- **Job Title**

In terms of job title, the revealed results showed that there are statistical significant differences for all employee empowerment' dimensions except the ability dimension. Statistical significant differences were found at level (0.01) for those employees who referred to middle level management for commitment and culture dimensions, this demonstrates that

this management level perceives the importance of employee empowerment in general and the significance of commitment and culture in particular more than those employees who referred to top management level. Whilst, results are statistically significant at level (0.01) for those employees who belongs to the top management level in terms of tasks whereas, differences among employees regarding job performance were statistically significant at level (0.01) for those who referred to the top management level. Thus this finding rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternate one.

MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the knowledge acquired from this study, the following practical implications are identified:

- The study highlights the importance of employee empowerment and its impact on job performance, therefore top management at the ministry of labor should pursue an empowerment strategy. This will allow an extent of flexibility through entitling employees to further authorities that will reinforce employees' confidence and raise their desire to bear extended responsibilities.
- Suggestions for new practices in getting all employee staff engagement in the decisions made by the top management at the ministry of labor have also been developed as a result of the research insights provided by this study.
- The authors concluded that an organization's long-term success is essentially determined by spreading a culture of empowerment among employees in general and females in particular to approximate between males and females in their approach towards empowerment.

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